Alternative jobs to retired armed personnel

350. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that all armed forces personnel below the rank of General or equivalent are required to retire in the prime of their youth, compelling them to search second careers which are difficult to get and thus rendering them jobless at the time of their need; and

(b) whether Government propose to take effective measures to provide alternative jobs to all armed forces retirees upto the age of 60 years as in the case of other All India Services?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (b) It is true that Armed Forces personnel below the rank of General and equivalent retire at relatively lower ages as compared to their civil counterparts. This is necessitated owning to the specific requirements of the Armed Forces keeping in view the fighting efficiency of the forces.

There is no proposal to provide alternative jobs upto the age of 60 years to all Armed Forces retirees.

Additional funds for upgradation of combat planes

351. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a report appearing in a prestigious defence industry newspaper that 50 per cent of combat planes of the IAF have been grounded is correct; and

(b) whether additional funds for upgradation were not sought well in advance to avoid this sort of situation compromising national security?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The report is incorrect, unfounded and misleading. Serviceability of the IAF fleet and equipement is of a high standard.

(b) Does nor arise. Complaints against Commandant

352. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently received complaints against local Commandant 18 F.A.D.-UCCHIBASSI district, Hoshiarpur in Punjab regarding corruption and irregularities resulting in loss to the exchaquer and harassment to the residents of local commandant area;

(b) if so, the specific charges levelled against the commandant;

(c) whether the charges have been inquired into;

(d) if so, the result of the inquiry and he action taken thereon; and

(e) if no inquiry has so far been conluctecVordered, the reasons therefor and)y when action on the complaints is likely o be taken?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to *[e)* A pseudonymous complaint has been received by the Chief of the Army Staff against local Commandant of 18 F.A.D. alleging misappropriation of rations and funds and cutting of trees in military premises. The complaint is uder investigation.

Arrest of international gun-runners

353. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reports appearing in Sunday dated the 30th August, 1998, under the heading "An officer in Bangkok" and if so, the details thereof and reaction of Government thereto;

(b) whether it is a fact that the Indian Forces had nabbed a gang of international gun-runners, allegedly supplying weapons to extremists organisation in North-East and seized an assorted catch